

DISTRICT 6



Council Member

DERRICK LEON DAVIS
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL, DISTRICT 6

DERRICK LEON DAVIS



Remarks

Council Chair Derrick L Davis

“Building Downtown Largo” Welcome Remarks As Prepared

Saturday, July 22, 2017

Good Morning!

It is my pleasure to welcome you to our District 6 Community Development Update: Building Downtown Largo!

Thank you, Mr. Stone, for that warm welcome, as the new Chair of the Board of Trustees for Prince George's Community College and, as you like to joke, “District 6’s Number One Constituent”.

In keeping to the spirit of collaboration and good faith which has carried us to this point in time, I want to take this moment to thank our all of the partners who helped make, today happen, and who will continue to work toward the outcomes we collectively community seek.

As I understand it, it is summer and many of these hardworking folk decided to get real European on us and took the opportunity of this hot, hot heat to enjoy some time off with their fine families! So unfortunately, some of the following good folk will only join us in spirit.

If you made it to the room this morning, please stand up and be recognized.

The indefatigable Senator for Legislative District 24, Joanne C. Benson.

Chair of the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission, and **my** great friend with the red hat, Betty M. Hewlett.

My brother, County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III

Any other elected representatives I may have missed, please excuse my omission and stand so that we may recognize you.

And, finally, my favorite Lead of Strategy and Implementation, Vanessa Akins and her fabulous team at the Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission.

Vanessa has been playing a critical role in the moving forward the vision of a bustling, Downtown Core since we started this process in 2012.

Let's give her a special round of applause.

I also want to make sure to thank my colleagues on the County Council.

Their ability to understand the vision our community has assembled for this critical regional center has been key to bringing forth a plan which takes on a holistic approach to rebuilding communities across our beautiful County.

Just this week, we joined together for a critical town hall meeting to discuss the Zoning Rewrite—a process which began in 2014 to update and streamline our 50-year-old Zoning Ordinance.

The goal of this process is to produce a guiding document which is user-friendly while providing appropriate representation and input by the community and their representatives. A code which will promote sustainable growth, sustainable communities, and a vibrant economy in Prince George's County.

In case you were unable to join us, I ask that you please check the Council's website for relevant documents at "www.pgccouncil.us"

And now to the business at hand—and I promise not to steal your ENTIRE Saturday morning.

I want to thank our presenters for the day:

Representing the University of Maryland Medical System:

President and CEO, Neil Moore; Board Member Judge Alex Williams; Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer, Alison Brown; Senior Vice President of External Affairs, Mark Wasserman; and, Bradford Seamon.

Representing the publically traded Retail Partners of America, Inc. today, will be Development Manager for the Eastern Division, Craig Friedson.

Please give our presenters a warm round of applause.

Thank you for being here!

Also present are great supporting team members that I hope you had a chance to meet.

Supporting Team UMMS: Vice President, Kristin Jones Bryce; Vice President, Karen Lancaster; and, Marketing and Branding Manager, Mary Lanham.

Supporting Team RPAI: Senior Vice President, Kim Fuhrman; Gingles LLC President and CEO, Andre Gingles; Mayson-Dixon Strategic Consulting President and CEO, Jayson Williams; Mayson-Dixon Senior Vice President, Nicholas Dewey; Mayson-Dixon Vice President, Monica Biscoe Brooks; and, Mayson-Dixon Creative Director, Chris Valentine.

Now, please give our support staff a warm welcome to the great District 6!

Last, but not least, I want to make sure to thank my staff, starting with the greatest Chief of Staff in the Great State of Maryland, Nell Johnson!

With her, I want to thank and recognize our staffers, Rita Lassiter, Lenne White and Sasha Desrouleaux, for providing Nell the support she needs to keep me on track and the interests of our communities at the forefront of agency decision-making.

One last thing before we dive into the rest of today's agenda.

I want to be crystal clear: today's discussion is not simply about the construction of another shopping mall and hospital. We've got plenty of the former and enough of the latter.

Some time ago, an announcement was made that a site which had been dormant since the Great Recession would finally be developed and that “Downtown Largo” was on its way.

A fascinating conversation ensued on Facebook (which is apparently where these take place these days).

The question was “What the heck is Downtown Largo??”

Well, let’s get that question answered off the bat:

The “wonky” version of the definition of the concept of a “downtown” is a “regionally competitive, economic generator for Prince George’s County.”

A downtown concentrates development rather than sprawl out to greener pastures. This promotes compact, mixed-use development at transit centers.

It promotes healthy lifestyles and quality, efficient public services. It capitalizes on our transportation networks, such as our Metro stations and the coming Purple Line.

This version of Downtown Largo, is born out of the work which resulted in the revision of Prince George’s County’s General Plan, **Plan 2035**.

Plan 2035 builds on our existing strengths and assets, focusing our energies on the county’s 15 Metro Stations and the corridors which connects them.

The result of that work included the Central Avenue Blue Line Corridor Study, the Largo Town Center Sector Plan, the creation of the Largo Town Center Development Review Board— if any of the members of the board are in the room today, please stand and be recognized for your hard work--, and the Central Avenue Connector Trail, which continues to move forward thanks in great part to Vanessa and her team. Those results also include the designation of the Central Avenue Blue Line Corridor as a Health Care and Life Sciences District. Further, the activity at the expanding Kaiser Medical Center will continue to accelerate, as other health related services like the new pediatric surgical center opens in Largo.

If you were watching ***really*** closely, you saw the Council enact policy directed at incentivizing development at Transit-Oriented sites throughout the County.

Today, Largo stands shoulder-to-shoulder among the 3 focus Downtown districts, including New Carrollton, and Prince George's Plaza/UMD-College Park.

The result is that as you traverse the Largo sector today, you will encounter development activity, such as Crescent at Largo, Tapestry, and the first phase of Ascend Apollo.

Today Downtown Largo is stepping forward into the shape our community leaders always envisioned it to be: a 24-hour activity center.

Downtown Largo is where the buildings stand a little taller than the rest.

It's where County business takes place.

It's where thousands of jobs are based.

It's a multi-modal transportation hub.

Downtown Largo is where you can catch a bus ride from Perrywood, hop onto a Metro car out to the Nation's Capital, Reagan National or Dulles International.

It's where major transportation arteries meet—202, 214, 495.

Downtown Largo is the spot you can metro to for an outdoors cultural festival, meet a buddy for dinner and end the night with a movie.

Better yet-- it's where you can leave that theater, stop and grab one last beer before grabbing a bike home to New Orchard Dr, or simply walk back to Zachery St, or catch a bus a few stops out to Golf Course Drive.

The idea of Downtown Largo is as a place which draws you in. Where you not only NEED to be, but WANT to be.

But that is not at all what you, the community, have worked so hard to bring to reality. To me, you worked for something far bigger than that.

What we're talking about today is how Prince George's County will from today forward, make collaboration the number one goal in building the future we seek. As you saw outside, what will be presented today is rooted in a truer systems thinking than what we have been accustomed to in the past.

Today is about thinking and doing BIGGER.

It's about understanding that we can and will tackle health disparities in a fair and equitable way.

About making sure what we do here in Largo **fits synergistically** with what grows up in the redevelopment of the Sanctuary at Hampton Mall. It's in the ways that we connect Brandywine to Laurel. It's in the ways that we continue to stoke the flames of a burgeoning regional entertainment destination in Oxon Hill, while continuing to attract globally competitive research and development investment at our World-class universities in College Park and Bowie.

To me, the two projects before you are about all these things and I hope that, by the end of today's meeting, you will get a better understanding of how you fit into this picture... and then run tell your neighbors.

Let's get this moving forward.